

Calendar No. 1065

68TH CONGRESS }
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
No. 1056

TO AUTHORIZE THE PRESIDENT IN CERTAIN CASES TO MODIFY VISÉ FEES

FEBRUARY 3 (calendar day, FEBRUARY 9), 1925.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. SHIPSTEAD, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, submitted
the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 4107]

The Committee on Foreign Relations, to which was referred the bill (S. 4107) to authorize the President in certain cases to modify visé fees, having had the bill under consideration, reports it back to the Senate without amendments and recommends that the bill do pass.

The act of May 22, 1918, provided that when the United States is at war, if the President should find that the public safety requires that restrictions and prohibitions in addition to those provided otherwise than by that act should be imposed upon the departure of persons from and their entry into the United States and should make public proclamation thereof, it should be unlawful for any alien to depart from or enter the United States except under such reasonable rules, regulations, and orders as the President should prescribe. The rules issued pursuant to that act required aliens seeking to enter the United States to present passports viséed by American consuls.

The diplomatic and consular appropriation act approved June 4, 1920, fixed a fee for the application for a visé at \$1 and for each visé at \$9.

The provisions of the act of May 22, 1918, in so far as they related to requiring passports and vesés from aliens seeking to enter the United States were continued in force and effect by the act of March 2, 1921.

The immigration act of May 24, 1924, provided that immigrant aliens coming to the United States should present immigration

visés issued by American consuls, and fixed the fees of such immigration visés at \$1 for the application and \$9 for the visé.

The bill (S. 4107) undertakes to authorize the President, to the extent consistent with the public interest, to reduce or abolish altogether visé fees in the case of any classes of aliens desiring to visit the United States who are not "immigrants" as defined in the immigration act of 1924 and who are citizens or subjects of countries which grant similar privileges to citizens of the United States of a similar class visiting such countries. The bill does not in any way affect the issue of passports to American citizens going abroad, nor does it authorize the waiving of the visé with respect to aliens coming to the United States. It does not change the existing requirement that all aliens seeking to come to the United States shall appear at an American consulate abroad and receive either a visé upon their passport or immigration visés according to whether they are non-immigrant or immigrant aliens. The bill authorizes the President to reduce or abolish visé fees with respect to nonimmigrant aliens in order that he may be placed in a position to negotiate successfully with foreign governments for the reduction of the visé fee or the abolishing of visé requirements with respect to American citizens visiting those countries.

The committee believes that having established, through the immigration act of 1924, the examination by American consular officers of all immigrants seeking to enter the United States, and through the determination of the status of and issue of appropriate documents to the individuals at foreign ports prior to their departure, thus obviating the necessity for denying them entry into the United States upon their arrival at an American port, it would be unfortunate to weaken that system in an endeavor to relieve nonimmigrant aliens of the inconvenience and expense of having their passports viséed, however desirable that relief might seem to be. Therefore the committee has not favored the abolishing of the visé with respect to nonimmigrant aliens. But it is not probable that the purpose which it is sought to accomplish will be defeated by the retention of the visé without charging a fee with respect to aliens seeking to come to the United States, because it is believed that other nations, which are not concerned with the admission of immigrants into their territory, will recognize not only the necessity which the United States feels for retaining the visé with respect to all aliens as a necessary aid to the proper administration of the immigration laws, but also the convenience which their own people will derive from its retention in having their status with respect to entering the United States practically determined before they depart from their own country, and that they will therefore be disposed to grant generous concessions even to the extent of abolishing entirely their own visé requirements in return for the abolishing of the visé fee now collected by the United States.

The advantage to American citizens of the action which the bill proposes to authorize is easily demonstrable. The act approved June 4, 1920, fixed the fee for the application for a visé at \$1 and for each visé of a passport for an alien at \$9. After the passage of that act many other nations raised their visé fee for American citizens to \$10. Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and

certain other European nations charge American citizens \$10 for each visé, notwithstanding the fact that they have agreements among themselves by which their nationals pay no visé fee or are exempted entirely from the necessity of having their passport viséed. According to statistics produced by the Department of State, at least 112,196 American citizens paid for American passports during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1924. It is probably accurate to say that most of those American citizens visited at least three foreign countries and therefore obtained at least three foreign visés. It is a well-known fact that a large proportion of American citizens traveling abroad, especially those proceeding to Europe, visit many more than three countries, and it is not uncommon for individual Americans to pay as much as from \$50 to \$100 for the visés required to enable them to visit the countries in which their business lies.

If, however, the Americans to whom passports were issued in 1924 visited only three countries, they must have paid for foreign visé fees, at the lowest, some \$3,365,880, in addition to the \$1,121,960 which the United States collected for issuing their passports. On the other hand, it is estimated by the Department of Labor that only some 68,785 nonimmigrant aliens paid passport visé fees to the United States during the same year and the total loss of revenue, if visé fees had been entirely abolished with respect to this class of aliens, would have been only \$687,850. The adoption of this bill would, therefore, enable the President to secure for Americans advantages out of all proportion to the revenue sacrificed.

Furthermore, the adoption of this bill and the loss of \$687,850 in fees collected would still leave the Consular Service, by which the visé system is administered, much more than self-supporting. According to the evidence produced by the Department of State to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, the total consular fees received during the year 1924 amounted to \$6,700,000 and over. The cost of the Consular Service during that year was about \$5,000,000. Therefore, on the basis of receipts and expenditures for 1924, if this bill should be adopted the Consular Service would not only be self-sustaining, but the receipts would still exceed the expenditures by more than \$1,000,000.

The existing fees charged by foreign governments for viséing the passports of Americans traveling abroad imposes a heavy burden. For several years business men and other travelers have protested against the necessity for paying such fees. The claim has been made that the war-time need for restrictions on travel no longer exists and that the high fees charged are embarrassing to travelers who can ill afford to pay them and place Americans proceeding abroad for business purposes in a position less favorable than that of their foreign competitors. A number of foreign governments already have reciprocal arrangements by which visés are waived altogether or fees reduced to a minimum. This bill is aimed primarily to relieve the American traveler and business man from an exorbitant tax by authorizing the President, through the reduction or abolition of our own visé fees on nonimmigrant travelers, to persuade foreign governments to reduce or abolish altogether their visé fees with respect to Americans traveling in their territory.

The bill as reported carries out the recommendation made by President Harding, has the approval of President Coolidge, and the official indorsement of the Secretary of State, who urges its enactment into law at the present session of Congress. The chambers of commerce in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Rochester, and other cities, together with the Merchants' Association of New York and other export and import houses, have urged the enactment of this legislation.

○